obligation of the concerned country to make every effort to ensure that places of religious worship in the agreed list are properly maintained and their sanctity preserved. Government of Pakistan has been apprised of the complaints received from time to time regarding the maintenance of the concerned religious shrines and the preservation of their sanctity.

It is also Government's view that recent changes made by the Government of Pakistan in the system of administration of Sikh religious shrines in that country constitute an interference in Sikh affairs.

Joint naval exercise by Pakistan and Bangladesh

†2027. SHRI DEVI PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan and Bangladesh held a joint naval exercise in last April;

(b) if so, whether Government had a prior information regarding this exercise;

(c) whether it is not necessary for a country to inform its neighbouring countries during the goodwill visit;

(d) the provision of international law/international agreement in this regard; and

(e) whether Pakistan and Bangladesh had fully observed the terms and conditions listed in International law/agreement during the said joint naval exercise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) According to reports available with Government, two Pakistani Naval ships and a submarine visited Chittagong (Bangladesh) as part of a "goodwill mission". During the visit, the Pakistan ships conducted joint naval exercises with the Bangladesh Navy. Government closely monitors all events having a direct bearing on India's national security and are firmly

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

resolved to take all necessary measures to preserve the security and territorial integrity of the country.

Inclusion of submarine launched ballistic missiles

2028. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that China which is ahead of India in the scale and range of its nuclear forces has been augmenting its capacity by including submarine launched ballistic missiles;

(b) whether it is a fact that China is also working towards the goal of achieving super power status and modernising its armed forces; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction in regard thereto specially when our border disputes have not been resolved as yet?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Government is aware of reports about China's ongoing programme to modernise its armed forces. China is already known to possess nuclear-capable submarine launched ballistic missiles.

(c) India and China seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question through peaceful consultations, which are ongoing. The 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, and the 1996 Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, provide an institutional framework for the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas. Government remains vigilant and takes all necessary steps and appropriate measures to safeguard the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of India.